



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI OFFERS AMENDMENT TO ENSURE FAIR DISTRIBUTION
OF CRITICALLY NEEDED HIV/AIDS FUNDING***

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today offered an amendment to ensure that no appropriations bill can be used to overturn the bipartisan, bicameral agreement on the Ryan White CARE Act reauthorization passed last year, and cheat communities in the South and rural America out of new funds they desperately need to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS.

“House Democrat Leadership has craftily and quietly snuck a provision into an appropriations bill that would rob disadvantaged individuals, living in underserved areas of the country, of money they desperately need for HIV/AIDS treatment,” Enzi said. “This end run goes against the very core of the mission of the Ryan White reauthorization passed last year, which revised critically flawed funding formulas to ensure that federal dollars are used to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic of today, not yesterday.”

“Where I come from, that’s called cheating. San Francisco is already receiving Ryan White money for people who have died. To take an additional \$6 million away from states that desperately need that money in order to give even more to San Francisco is reprehensible. This is an earmark of the worst class, and I hope to make clear that it is unacceptable in this body.”

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report recently released confirmed that a provision added by House Democrat Leadership to the House appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, H.R. 3043, would take away \$9.3 million dollars from areas of the country that have been underserved by Ryan White for years, and give it to areas that have been receiving far more than their fair share of federal dollars. For example, San Francisco, which has a declining HIV/AIDS population, would rob the neediest cities of lifesaving funding. House Democrat Leadership would earmark \$6.1 million for San Francisco.

The GAO report also confirmed that San Francisco receives funding under Ryan White for people who have died.

“I am pleased that the Senate did not include this egregious provision, and I hope today that the Senate will go on record opposing any provision that would undo all of the good work we did on Ryan White, and would put lives in jeopardy,” Enzi said.

“There are people in rural and Southern areas – where the HIV/AIDS epidemic is spreading most rapidly – who are dying while on waiting lists to get the treatment they need. The reauthorization bill we passed prevents that. Yet Speaker Pelosi and House Leadership are more concerned with funneling even more money into San Francisco than with saving lives in places where people are dying to get that money.”

The RWCA reauthorization bill signed into law last year saves lives by increasing overall investment in Ryan White programs and revising flawed funding formulas, which currently favor states with urban areas and a longer history of AIDS infections over states where the disease is now spreading most rampantly. It better targets funding so that infected persons have better access to high quality health care, improve accountability for health outcomes, and ensure more equitable treatment opportunities for all persons with HIV/AIDS. The House Leadership rider guts the fair funding formulas that save lives.

The GAO report, GAO-08-137R, is available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08137r.pdf>.

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